

Character Class

Stealthy Rascals 3

Rascally Protection and Gear

By Skip Williams



When last we met, we considered [weaponry and armor for stealthy characters](#). This time, we'll look at armor in more detail and then move on to examine other items that might prove useful. Stealthy characters usually have a potent array of class features and an impressive roster of useful skills, but it never hurts to expand your bag of tricks with the right mix of equipment.

Armor Revisited

As noted last time, plan to invest 20% to 30% of your portable wealth into some kind of defensive gear. For most rascals, that means a suit of masterwork light armor such as studded leather and a masterwork buckler. This approach works if you can afford all the gear and you if you can actually carry and use it.

If you have a low Strength score, however, or if you have no armor or shield proficiency, *bracers of armor* might prove a better bet than any suit of armor. In any case, avoid armor and shields (except, perhaps, as emergency gear) if you have class features that become unavailable when you're armored. A monk, for example, is generally better off avoiding any armor or shield.

On the other hand, some rascals, such as rangers, aren't limited to light armor and can use most shields. You can't go far wrong if you buy the heaviest armor and shield that your character can use without incurring any penalties.



Dexterity Bonus and Armor Class

Stealthy rascals tend to have fairly high Dexterity scores, so always pay attention to the maximum Dexterity bonus the armor you've chosen allows. If your armor keeps you from using your full Dexterity bonus, you might find yourself spending cash and getting little useful increase in protection. You will eventually face combat situations when you'll lose your Dexterity bonus anyway. For example, if you're caught flat-footed or when fighting an opponent you can't see, or when something holds you immobile. Nevertheless, you'll most often fight while on your feet and able to duck and weave (if you have the uncanny dodge class feature, you can keep your Dexterity bonus to Armor Class at times when many other characters can't). It pays to keep your Dexterity working for your defense. In addition, any kind of armor that limits your Dexterity bonus to Armor Class probably also gives you a penalty on Dexterity-based skills, and you should have those in abundance.

For those reasons, think twice before you don any armor that interferes with your Dexterity bonus.

Building Up Your Armor Class

Once you have purchased your armor and shield (if any), consider adding an item such as a *ring of protection* or *amulet of natural armor* for your next Armor Class increase. Adding one of these items to your array of defensive items is cheaper than increasing the enhancement on your armor or shield and can help you in other ways if you choose the right item. The advice given in [part four in the series on sturdy brawlers](#) applies to you as well.

Other Gear

If you follow the advice from [Part Two](#), you should have between 30% and 50% of your equipment budget available for purchasing gear other than armor and weapons. When purchasing such gear, look for items that make you better at what you do or that open up new possibilities for you. Here are a few tried and true classics.

Dexterity Increases

As a stealthy rascal, you just cannot be too agile, so consider some *gloves of dexterity*. A Dexterity boost improves your initiative score, and that's useful both for staying out of harm's way in a fight and for getting in the first blow (which is particularly important for anyone with the sneak attack class feature).

Depending on what kind of armor you're wearing, a Dexterity boost also can improve your Armor Class.

Most stealthy rascals have excellent Reflex saving throws, but a few extra points to your Reflex save bonus from an increased Dexterity score can't hurt.

Finally, an improved Dexterity score also improves the bonuses for all your Dexterity based skills, and for most stealthy rascals that means boosting several skills simultaneously.

Wisdom Increases

Stealthy rascals, on the whole, aren't known for their Wisdom -- isn't that sort of the point of being a rascal? Unfortunately, Wisdom is the game's perception skill, and being alert to potential dangers can help you enjoy a long and successful career. A Wisdom increase from a *periapt of Wisdom* also boosts your Will saves, and that can save your life or at least help you avoid some nasty embarrassments.

If you're playing a monk, a Wisdom increase also boosts the Armor Class bonus you get from your class AC bonus feature. Unfortunately, a *periapt of Wisdom* uses the same item slot you that an *amulet of natural armor* uses. That means you must either skip the amulet to use the periapt or find (or purchase) a natural armor boost or a Wisdom boost that uses a different item slot, such as an *incandescent blue ioun stone*.

Mobility

Items that improve your speed or grant you a new mode of movement can open many new possibilities for you, especially if you serve as an advance scout for your group. Having enhanced speed also gives you the means to get out of trouble faster than you got into trouble.

The most spectacular items in this group are things that grant the power of flight. When you can fly, you can reach many places that would otherwise prove inaccessible, avoid many hazards, and literally get the upper hand over foes.

Compact flight items that you wear, such as *winged boots* or *wings of flying* work best, because you can activate them whenever you need them. Things you can ride on, such as a *broom* or *carpet of flying* or an *ebony fly* can work well, even though they might prove hard to carry and can take some time to get ready for use. These items, however, might allow you to haul along an ally or two.

Any item that allows sustained flight is very expensive, so gear that allows short trips aloft often proves to be the better choice. Short hops, such as crossing chasms just slightly too wide to jump, are more common than whole oceans that you'll need to cross.

Winged boots fall into this category (they work three times a day for up to five minutes at a time), but a *potion of fly* can work just as well for a short hop.

Flight isn't the only mobility boost worth looking into. *Boots of speed* give you a nice increase in land speed when you activate them and give you other benefits from the *haste* spell, though they only work for 10 rounds each day. *Boots of striding and springing* work continuously, giving a modest boost to your land speed and a jump bonus that might help you clear or cross obstacles that are otherwise impassible. A potion of *haste* can give you a short burst of speed when you need it.

A *levitate* or *feather fall* effect (from a potion or ring as appropriate for the effect) often makes a decent substitute for true flight. If you often adventure indoors or underground, *slippers of spider climbing* or *gloves of swimming and climbing* help you move up and down whenever there is a vertical surface to climb.

Adventurers don't always have the pleasure of moving over dry land. Some adventuring sites are completely submerged, and many other sites feature water hazards, such as flooded pits or moats. The aforementioned *gloves of swimming and climbing* help you deal with those, as does a *ring of swimming*. A *water breathing* effect

from a potion or from an item such as a *cloak of the manta ray* or a *helm of underwater action* allows you to linger underwater for a short time or as long as you like, depending on the item. A *bottle of air* can allow you a quick breath whenever you need some clean air. A *necklace of adaptation* allows you to breathe just about anywhere.

Stealth

Though you might have the skills (namely Hide and Move Silently) to move about quietly and without attracting notice, a little magical help can't hurt.

In most situations, the ultimate form of stealth is an invisibility effect. Most creatures hunt and fight by sight, so you have a huge advantage when you can't be seen. Very alert creatures might be able to discern your position but usually only when they're very close by. Some creatures, however, don't rely on sight, so it pays to keep up your Hide ranks to elude such creatures.

It's hard to beat a *ring of invisibility* for sneaking around unseen. A *ring of invisibility* costs a great deal, so you might consider a *potion of invisibility* for use in really challenging situations.

If you can grab some cover (or arrange for some concealment), you can use Hide checks to stay out of sight. It's hard to beat a *robe of blending* for a boost to your Hide skill. A *robe of blending* also allows you to disguise yourself as another creature, which can be great on infiltration missions.

If a *robe of blending* proves too rich your blood, consider a *cloak of elvenkind* instead. It doesn't allow you to disguise yourself and provides a smaller bonus than the robe. It's much cheaper, however.

For moving silently, consider *boots of elvenkind* or an *elixir of sneaking* for a temporary boost.

Carrying Capacity

It's always a good idea to travel light when you're a stealthy rascal, but you don't want to pass up any chance to collect piles of loot. If you plan to use the Sleight of Hand skill to pick a few pockets, it pays to have a place where you can quickly stash whatever you happen to pick up.

A *portable hole* allows you a considerable volume of whatever you care to gather. If you can't swing a *portable hole*'s hefty price tag, a *bag of holding* or a *Heward's handy haversack* has plenty of room for treasure or even a helpless companion or two.

Consider one or two *gloves of storing* for holding a few small but useful bits of gear.

A *vest of escape* or a *robe of useful items* is great for keeping a few vital tools or handy items within reach.

First Aid

You can't always avoid getting hurt, so keep a few potions of *cure light wounds* (or something stronger) on hand to heal yourself quickly. A few other remedies, such as vials of antitoxin, potions of *delay* or *neutralize poison*, or a potion of *lesser restoration* can keep you going when a cleric or other healer isn't at hand. If you don't care to carry a small pharmacy with you, *Keoghtom's ointment* comes as close to a universal cure as the *D&D* game gets.

Nonmagical Equipment

Don't forget mundane or masterwork items that can help you out of a jam. Essentials include:

- rope, pitons, and a hammer (useful for climbing, binding captured foes, and other tasks);
- masterwork thieves' tools (essential if you plan to use the Open Lock or Disable Device skills);
- alchemist's fire (often an effective weapon and handy for starting a fire in a hurry, too);
- acid (another useful weapon and often useful as a quiet method for dealing with locks, chains, and other closures);
- candles (good for a little light, for searching out tiny air currents, and a few blobs of melted wax can work wonders in many situations);
- flint and steel or a few tindertwigs (for lighting those candles).

Scrolls

Any effect you can get in a potion you also can get in a scroll, and scrolls are slightly cheaper than potions. If you have spellcasting ability or the Use Magic Device skill, consider scrolls instead of potions at least some of the time.

To learn more about stealthy rascals, be sure to read our installment on [character roles](#) and [stealthy races](#).

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of ***Dragon Magazine*** for many years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

©1995-2007 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.